IN MEMORIAM

Encik Kiah bin Haji Mohamed Salleh (1902-1982)

It is with regret that I heard of the death of Encik Kiah bin Haji Mohamed Salleh on 12 September 1982 in Singapore. Kiah was appointed as a plant collector in the herbarium, Botanic Gardens, Singapore in 1920 and retired at the end of 1957 after over 37½ years of dedicated service. He was already on the staff when I first went to Singapore in July 1922 and my first close acquaintance with him was in November of that year when Mr. I. H. Burkill arranged for me to do some collecting in Johore and Negri Sembilan accompanied by Mohamed Nur and Kiah. At Mr. Burkill's request, I paid special attention to ferns, of which I had already acquired some knowledge; Kiah and I learned much about other plants from Mohamed Nur. Afterwards Kiah went with me to many other places, including Mt. Kinabalu, to which I will refer later.

Kiah accompanied the senior members of the Gardens staff on most of the collecting journeys in the Malay Peninsula during his time and I regret that I have not a complete list of them. The value of the herbarium specimens preserved in Singapore and distributed as duplicates during many years is largely due to his care and skill in handling and drying them in the field; on that material much of our current knowledge of Malayan plants depends.

In addition to the journeys arranged by the Gardens, Kiah accompanied expeditions organized from other institutions on several occasions. In 1924 he went with Boden Kloss, then Director of the Raffles Museum, Singapore, to the Mentawai Islands, and again with F. W. Forworthy, Forest Research Officer, to peninsular Thailand in 1930, also helping two other forest botanists on other occasions: E. J. Strugnell in Pahang in 1930 and C. F. Symington on Gunong Tapis in 1937. He was responsible for the collecting on an expedition to Gunong Padang in Trengganu organised by L. Moysey in 1937. The principal collecting journey undertaken independently by Kiah was to Kedah and Perlis in March and April 1938, including Gunong Liang, the Koh Moi Forest Reserve, and the limestone hill at Baling. There can have been few people who travelled more widely in Malayan forests than Kiah.

Between collecting expeditions, Kiah helped in the routine work of the herbarium, undertaking the poisoning of all specimens and preparing them for mounting or despatch to other herbaria. As his knowledge grew, he helped Mohamed Nur in sorting specimens for identification.

In 1931 Kiah went with me to Mt. Kinabalu. There was no road in those days. We landed our baggage at Usukan Bay near Kota Belud, where the District Officer was very helpful in recruiting a team of carriers with whom we walked to Dallas, where we joined Joseph and Mary Clemens who were spending a prolonged period for collecting on the mountain. They had a base at Tenompok, from which we climbed the the top of the mountain, later visiting Kiau and then climbing the Marei Parei Ridge. I concentrated my attention on ferns, which had been my

Kiah bin Haji Mohamed Salleh

On Mt Kinabalu at 11,000 ft altitude, November 1931.
Photograph by R.E. Holttum

principal objects of study during the preceding years. Collection of other plants was largely due to Kiah; among them were palms, which Dr Furtado was then studying, and three palms, previously unknown, were named in honour of Kiah, namely *Pinanga keahii* Furt., *Calamus kiahii* Furt. and *Licuala kiahii* Furt. Kiah was an excellent colleague, always at hand when needed. He was an expert in drying specimens over an open fire without burning them, often under trying conditions; it was the only available method except for some ferns which would dry quickly without heat.

Later, when Mr M.R. Henderson was writing his monograph on the genus *Eugenia* in Malaya (Gard. Bull. vol. 12, 1949) he based two new species on specimens collected by Kiah, namely *E. kiahii* Hend. from Sungei Kayu, Johore, and *E. pseudoclaviflora* Hend. from Gunong Tahan. Kiah's collection of the orchid *Calanthe masuca* (Don) Lindl. in Kedah was the only one known from the Malay Peninsula when I wrote my book on the orchids of Malaya.

Kiah was a responsible and reliable person as well as a very observant collector and during his long service acquired a very wide knowledge of local plants. He had a very even temperament and I never saw him put out by trying circumstances. I salute his memory and remember him with thankfulness.

R. E. HOLTTUM

Ed. note: From 1949 until 1957 Kiah continued to work in the herbarium and during his later years of service worked closely with Mr. James Sinclair and with Dr. Chew Wee Lek. After his retirement, Encik Kiah remained mostly at home tending his garden and enjoying his pension. Further details concerning Kiah's collecting trips can be found in Fl. Males. I, vol. 1 (1950) 280 and I, vol. 8 (1974) LV.